

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 914

By Bone

A RESOLUTION to commend Commissioner Ken Givens for his honorable and astute service to the people of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants who have dedicated themselves to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Ken Givens is one such estimable person who evinces the greatest integrity and probity in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, throughout his illustrious career as a farmer, businessman, legislator, and Commissioner of Agriculture, Mr. Givens has distinguished himself as a public-spirited citizen of the highest order and as an exceptional asset to his community; and

WHEREAS, a native of Rogersville, Ken Givens was raised on a dairy, beef, and tobacco farm where he learned the value of hard work and discipline; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Givens is a United States Army veteran and holds a bachelor's degree in history and political science and a master's degree in political science from East Tennessee State University; and

WHEREAS, first elected to the State House of Representatives in 1988, Ken Givens rapidly earned his reputation as a tireless advocate for Tennessee agriculture; he served as the Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee from 1997 to 2002 and spent four years on the Tennessee Tobacco Farmers Certifying Board; and

WHEREAS, during his fourteen-year tenure in the House, Mr. Givens was instrumental in passing key farm legislation, including a measure to ensure that existing farm operations could expand under Tennessee's right-to-farm law; he also sponsored important forest management and dairy farming legislation and took a special interest in school health issues,

sponsoring and passing legislation that created pilot programs for the model school health initiative, which has now been expanded statewide; and

WHEREAS, on Jan. 18, 2003, Ken Givens was appointed as Tennessee's thirty-fourth Commissioner of Agriculture by Governor Phil Bredesen; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Givens led the department's efforts to establish for the first time a statewide Agritourism Initiative in partnership with the Department of Tourist Development and the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development; by providing business, technical, promotional, and financial support to hundreds of agritourism venues, the initiative has increased farm income and opportunities for farm families while bringing tourists to rural communities across Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Givens also committed department resources to establish a Governor's School for Agricultural Sciences; for this outstanding extra-curricular study program has graduated more than 150 of the highest achieving students from across Tennessee in the growing and highly competitive field of agricultural sciences, including the studies of food, fiber, and fuel production; and

WHEREAS, with an unprecedented \$20 million investment in 2005, Ken Givens completely updated the Division of Forestry's heavy firefighting equipment, making the wildland firefighting force capable of responding more quickly, safely, and efficiently to wildfires and protecting the state's vast private and public forest resources; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of and the need to better safeguard Tennessee's \$1.3 billion dollar livestock industry, Commissioner Givens established the West Tennessee Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in partnership with the University of Tennessee at Martin, and, for the first time, critical, affordable diagnostic services are now available to farmers, companion animal owners, and private veterinarians in all three grand divisions of the State; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Givens advocated for the fair treatment of Tennessee tobacco farm families and guided the successful completion of the National Tobacco Growers Settlement Trust in Tennessee, which distributed more than \$170 million to the state's 48,000 tobacco farm families; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Givens guided the department's efforts to administer the Boll Weevil Eradication Program in an effort to rid Tennessee of the costliest agricultural pest in U.S. history and reduce costs to cotton growers; this vital program has resulted in significant economic and environmental benefits to the State through record cotton yields, increased farm income, and reduced insecticide; and

WHEREAS, as an advocate for the State's livestock industry, Ken Givens reorganized the regulatory administration of Tennessee's livestock market industry by streamlining licensing requirements and by opening markets to fair and open competition for the benefit of Tennessee farmers; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Givens has been a driving force behind and champion for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program, which has provided more than \$74 million in cost share assistance to the state's farmers and rural communities since 2005 and improved production and increased profitability in more than 15,500 farm projects; and

WHEREAS, in April of 2004, Governor Bredesen named Mr. Givens the Chairman of the Governor's Task Force on Methamphetamine Abuse, which developed a comprehensive strategy for addressing the manufacture, trafficking, and abuse of this ruinous drug. Ken Givens's unflinching approach has significantly reduced the number of homegrown meth labs; and

WHEREAS, as the Commissioner of Agriculture, he also renders sterling service to the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, the Board of Regents for the State University and Community College System, the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Commission, and the Tennessee Homeland Security Council, for which he coordinates the Department's activities regarding animal health, chemical use, food safety, and other security matters; and

WHEREAS, a true leader among his peers, Ken Givens championed the agricultural interests of fifteen southern states and two U.S. territories as the President of the Southern Association of State Departments of Agriculture and the Southern United States Trade Association; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Givens's remarkable success as a public servant and civic leader is directly attributable to his reliance on the time-honored values of hard work and common sense and his uncommon ability to work well with people from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Givens treasured many wonderful years with his late wife, Connie Hall Givens, who tirelessly worked with her husband to improve children's health and nutrition, serving as the first State Director of the Coordinated School Health Program in the Department of Education before her unfortunate passing; and

WHEREAS, his many accomplishments aside, Mr. Givens is fortunate to share both love and companionship with his three grown children and his wonderful granddaughter, Zoe; and

WHEREAS, Ken Givens is wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and he should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby commend Ken Givens for his honorable and astute service to the good people of Tennessee and salute his unswerving commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.